

CONFERENCE DOCUMENT

FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL DEPUTY MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR
JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY – FEBRUARY 21-22, 2023

FIREARMS BUYBACK PROGRAM

SPONSORING JURISDICTION: Public Safety Canada

ISSUE / DECISION REQUEST:

To provide an update to the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Deputy Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety on federal efforts to implement a Firearms Buyback Program in a safe and efficient manner.

BACKGROUND:

- The Government of Canada is committed to protecting public safety. The prohibition of assault-style firearms (ASFs) and the Firearms Buyback Program are only one part of the Government's multi-faceted approach to keeping Canadians safe, including investments in law enforcement and border security, providing funding for communities to tackle the root causes of violence, introducing measures to prevent gun and gang violence, and strengthening Canada's gun control laws.
- The Government of Canada has prohibited certain firearms that are designed to fire a high number of rounds in a short amount of time and this is reflected in the proposed amendments to Bill C-21.
- The Firearms Buyback Program builds on the Government's measures to protect the public from firearms violence, and complements the May 1, 2020, prohibition of ASFs by safely and securely removing these firearms from Canadian communities.
- In keeping with its core policing mandate, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) will be the main agency responsible for leading the collection of these ASFs as it has operations in most provinces and territories. All RCMP resources that may be used to support the delivery of this program will be funded exclusively by the federal government.
- While the RCMP will be the primary collection agency, given the high volume of firearms to collect, Public Safety has held numerous conversations with other levels of government, police services, and the firearms industry across the country to develop partnerships for the successful implementation of this Program.
- These conversations have focused on understanding the operational realities specific to each jurisdiction, costs to implement the program, and what would be required to partner in the delivery of the Program within that jurisdiction.

- This Program will look to build on the firearms surrender process that is already well-established today with police services across the country and will not take officers away from the important work they do every day to keep Canadians safe. The safety of Canadians will always remain the priority.

NEXT STEPS:

- Timelines for the launch of the Program will be communicated once these engagement efforts have established the conditions for a coordinated and successful national implementation.
- At this time, the destruction of business inventory is anticipated to begin mid-2023. Public Safety is advancing the development of a case management system and web portal to support the collection of individuals' firearms for the second half of 2023.
- Public Safety has been meeting with key police services and will continue to discuss more specific program delivery costs in their area of service. There have been encouraging discussions with Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and a number of cities, including Victoria, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Saint John, Halifax, and Charlottetown.
- Engagement with Indigenous communities will also be initiated shortly to more fully understand their concerns and unique considerations, as part of a broader engagement strategy on reducing gun violence.
- Contingent on finalizing the Program design and funding model, we are encouraged by the number of jurisdictions who have expressed an interest in partnering on the delivery of this important Program. It is anticipated that agreements-in-principle with many jurisdictions could be concluded by mid-2023.
- Public Safety has also been discussing partnerships with industry to reduce the burden on police resources. It is anticipated that collection from businesses – including collection, transport, destruction, and payment – would be handled primarily by an industry partner under contract.
- The Government of Canada recognizes that provinces have raised concerns about the use of RCMP resources. The Government can confirm that RCMP resources will be augmented to safely deliver the Firearms Buyback Program and those resources will be fully funded by the Government of Canada. As is the case now, front line priorities will always take precedence over firearms collection.